

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6679

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGUI 0270

LIMDIS

FOR AF/C - AMBASSADOR QUANTON AND DAVID CARDWELL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, CT

SUBJECT: EMBASSY FSL GIVEN DEATH SENTENCE IN ASSASSINATION TRIAL

REF: BANGUI 0266

1. SUMMARY AS REFTEL BEING TRANSMITTED, DIPLOMATIC CORPS CONVOKED TO EARLY MORNING "PUBLIC" TRIBUNAL WHICH HAS JUST CONCLUDED ELEVEN HOURS LATER WITHOUT INTERRUPTION. TWELVE OF TWENTY ACCUSED OF INVOLVEMENT IN ABORTIVE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT BOKASSA FEBRUARY 3 RECEIVED DEATH SENTENCE INCLUDING EMBASSY SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE LOCAL MARC CALDO. TWO OTHERS RECEIVED TWENTY YEARS AND THREE GOT TEN YEARS. A FRENCH ACCOMPLICE SENTENCED 3 YEARS AND TWO WERE SET FREE. END SUMMARY.

2. CALDO WAS PRINCIPALLY ACCUSED OF ENCOURAGING MAIN PERPETRATOR, MAJOR OBROU, TO ATTEMPT COUP D'ETAT BY GIVING HIM MONEY AND PROMISING HIM A MILLION DOLLARS OR SO IN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE ONCE BOKASSA OVER THROWN. CALDO GAVE PERHAPS STRONGEST DEFENSE OF TRIAL. HE WAS ABLE TO DISMANTLE IN LARGE PART FACTLESS REPRESENTATIONW OF OBROU. CALDO SAID THAT ANY GOCAR ATTEMPT TO BLAME EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 3 ON CIA WOULD NOT WASH. HE SAID
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IN PAST 8 - 10 MONTHS RELATIONS HAD REACHED NEW PINNACLES. WHY HE ASKED RHETORICALLY IF HE WERE WORKING FOR CIA WOULD BE ATTEMPT A COUP D'ETAT WHEN OUR RELATIONS WERE ALREADY SO GOOD. CALDO SAID BILATERAL ACTIVITIES WERE EXPANDING IN ALL AREAS, SINGLING OUT ESPECIALLY DOUBLING OF PEACE CORPS AND ECONMIC ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES.

3. APART FROM TRIBUNAL'S IDENTIFICATION OF CALDO AS AN EMBASSY EMPLOYEE, THERE HAS THUS FAR BEEN NO MOVE BY GOCAR TO PLACE ANY OF BLAME FOR ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AT DOORSTEP OF EMBASSY. BOKASSA OF COURSE HAS NOT YET SPOKEN. AND ONLY WHEN HE DOES WILL PROVERBIAL OTHER FOOT FALL. THIS MAY COME TOMORROW FEBRUARY 14.

4. WHILE CALDO IS NOT AN AMERICAN CITIZEN, HE HAS GIVEN USG NEARLY TEN YEARS OF RATHER GOOD SERVICE. OUR KNOWLEDGE OF HIM COUPLED WITH HIS TESTIMONY TODAY LEADS US TO BELIEVE THAT HE WAS PROBABLY NOT INVOLVED IN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT. WHATEVER TRUE FACTS MAY EVENTUALLY PROVE TO BE, NEED TO KNOW IMMEDIATELY DEPARTMENT'S POLICY ON INTERCESSION FOR MORE LENIENT SENTENCE IN BEHALF OF FSLs. SHOULD EMBASSY ATTEMPT TO INTERCEDE FOR CALDO, REALIZING CALCULATED RISK THAT THIS MIGHT UNDERSCORE ANY CONNECTION GOCAR MIGHT BE MAKING BETWEEN CALDO AND CIA. WE DO NOT OF COURSE EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT BOKASSA WILL USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO DISPLAY THAT HE IS BENEVOLENT BY OVERTHROWING COURT'S RULING IN FAVOR OF SOMETHING SHORT OF ACTUAL EXECUTION.

5. EMBASSY WILL INFORM DEPARTMENT IMMEDIATELY SHOULD GOCAR/BOKASSA FORMALLY ACCUSE EMBASSY, CIA OR US GOVERNMENT OF INVOLVEMENT IN EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 3. SWING

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